

Sermon for Good Friday – John 19:25-37

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

“One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.” Blood. It’s a major theme in John’s Gospel. From very early on we hear, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” The Lamb, Jesus, will shed His blood. Later Jesus says, “Whoever feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life.” Blood serves one purpose: to wash away sin.

And sin is always nearby, standing at the door of our lives. That’s because we never measure up. We never do enough. We all fall short of the glory of God. But just because sin keeps knocking at our door, it doesn’t mean we have to let him in.

But we do! We let him in! And when we do, the lies, the regrets, trash our lives. And after making a terrible mess, our hidden guilt wants to stay with us for the rest of our lives. And what do we say? We allow it. And so we spend the rest of our lives trying to get rid of sin and all of its ugly consequences by setting to work with our own man-made devices:

Like projection. That’s one way we try to beat sin in our lives. Project it onto someone else. Blame someone. Blame *anyone*. Blame your husband. Blame your wife. Blame your parents. Blame your teachers. And while you’re at it, blame the government and the system.

Or rationalization is another way we try to conquer our sin. “What I did is *no big deal!*” “It didn’t *really* hurt *anybody*.” “It’s just this once. Besides, *no one* will ever know.”

Then there's comparison. "If you think I'm bad, you should see my boss!" "At least I'm not as bad as my sister!" "Well, remember what *he* did?" "Ha! I'm a saint compared to them!"

Or how about repression? Stuff that guilt down. *Stuff it way down*. Live in denial. "I know it was wrong, but I'm just not going to deal with it!"

Or how about distraction? Rush around from one thing to the next so that at night you collapse. Run yourself ragged so that when you hit the pillow, sin doesn't haunt your heart and muddle your mind.

And then there's evasion. Pop a pill or have a drink. Escape into the world of reality TV, sports, money—you name it. Anything to evade the all-consuming consequences of sin!

I think we can see the problem with all this: it doesn't work! *None of this works!* We wake up the next day, with our guilt is still there, making life miserable and absolutely unbearable!

There's only one solution to sin. Stand with St. John under Christ's cross. "He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe" (John 19:35). John was there, at the cross. He saw it all go down. John gives his testimony. And this testimony is true. And what would that be? Christ's blood *alone* washes away sin. All sin. Everyone's sin. Yours. Mine. His. Hers. Theirs. For everyone who believes, all sin is forgiven because of His blood!

Sin is forgiven—that's free. It cost us nothing. Good Friday, though, calls us to remember what it cost Jesus. His crucifixion at Golgotha was an act of utter brutality and humiliation. Jesus is first stripped before Herod's soldiers. He's stripped again at the command of Pilate. And then He's stripped once more at the cross as soldiers vie for His garment by casting lots.

What did it cost Him? Jesus was flogged by the Romans. Roman soldiers used a whip of braided leather with spikes woven into them. This whipping would have gone all the way from His shoulders down to the back of His legs. The Romans threw Jesus on the wood of the cross and drove tapered spikes through His hands and feet—all the while mocking Him and spitting on Him.

What did it cost Him? On the cross, Christ's arms were stretched and His shoulders dislocated. Any movement increased His pain until He became completely exhausted and unable to breathe.

What did it cost Him? As Jesus slowed down His breathing, His heart began beating erratically. He would have known that death was near. His heart broke and He died.

“One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe” (John 19:34–35). We stand at the foot of the cross where our Savior died, with John.

For when we stand under Christ's cross, we are never alone. Jesus is there. His head hangs to one side and His body hangs limp. He paid the cost for us. He died for us.

We are never alone. Mary, our Lord's mother is there. Mary is reaching up to her Son, as the church whom she symbolizes ever does. Her grieving face reflects her broken heart and we remember Simeon's prophecy that a sword would pierce her own heart also. We can scarcely imagine Mary's profound sense of loss and grief. Another Mary is there: Mary Magdalene. Her tears show us that she is crushed—*utterly*. So much so that on Sunday morning she runs frantically, searching for Jesus where His body was laid.

We are never alone. Joseph of Arimathea is there. He is rich for he has enough money to buy burial spices, and he had a new tomb—all for Jesus. Along with him is Nicodemus, a leader among the Pharisees who came to Jesus at night for fear of his colleagues. On this night, though, he is fearless. He would be nowhere else than with Christ and with the others.

We are never alone. And finally, there's John, the Gospel writer. John is the beloved disciple. He is the son of Zebedee and the brother of James. John now cares for Mary, the mother of Christ upon our Lord's request from the cross, "Woman, behold, your son! . . . Behold, your mother!" John has cared for this Mary (the church) in giving us his testimony of witness to Christ's Passion in the blessed Gospel that bears his name.

For Christ's blood drips from His head, His hands, and His side. Christ's blood continues downward until it pours directly onto *John*. It pours into his pen and to the sacred page. Christ's blood pours into the ears of those who would hear and receive his Gospel. So His blood too pours into our hearts.

John is washed in Christ's blood! And John says that very same blood is for you! This is John's testimony, and John's testimony is true! For you, too, are beloved disciples.

So stand at the foot of the cross, like John and the others. Hold on to Jesus. Allow the Savior's blood to wash you. Why? Because Christ's blood is the only solution for all of your sin. Stand at the foot of the cross forever forgiven by His blood! Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. ✠BJF✠